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Gravel Blocked in Bid To Reveal Viet Study

By ORR KELLY and
RONALD SARRO
Star Staff Writers

Sen. Mike Gravel, D-Alaska, today was blocked in an attempt to put into the Congressional Record a secret 1969 national security report on the Vietnam war which he says shows President Nixon's decisions were made solely to save "political face."

Gravel took the Senate floor shortly after 10 a.m. saying he had studied the report and found there was no information in it which would jeopardize the safety of the United States.

His move to put the report in the Record was stopped by Sen. Robert Griffin of Michigan, assistant Senate Republican leader, who expressed strong objection to making public a secret document.

Excerpts from the study were published yesterday by Newsweek magazine and columnist Jack Anderson and this morning by the Washington Post.

Study No. 1

Aides to Gravel said the published papers are a summary of a much more extensive document the senator has in his possession.

They said the papers in Gravel's possession involve all or a major part of National Security Study Memorandum No. 1, which was ordered by President Nixon the day after he took office on Jan. 20, 1969.

The papers published in the Post show the President was given a decidedly pessimistic view of the situation in Vietnam — more gloomy in some ways, in fact, than the way events have developed.

He was told that, even with planned improvements, the South Vietnamese armed forces might not even be able to cope with the local Viet Cong on their own, let alone deal with main force North Vietnamese units; that completion of the pacification program would take from 8.5 to 13.4 more years and that the enemy seemed both willing and able to make a last ditch

losses and continue fighting indefinitely.

"All agencies agreed," the report said, "that RVNAF (Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces) could not, either now or even when fully modernized, handle both the VC and a sizeable level of NVA forces without U.S. combat support in the form of air, helicopters, artillery, logistics and some ground forces."

In the Senate today, Griffin said he considers it "very unfortunate if (Gravel) should seek to take it upon himself solely to be the judge of the classification or declassification" of secret documents.

Gravel said the document shows that in formulating his Vietnamization policy, Nixon's one and only concern was "to save face . . . the political face of one individual."

On Vietnamization, Gravel said, "Everyone advising the President at that time advised him that the policy wouldn't work" and the President was told it had not worked in the past.

He likened Nixon's actions to those of "dictators and monarchs of the past."

At a press conference afterwards, Gravel said, "It is still my intention to release every last stitch of this paper to the American people." But he added that he would have to await "developments" to see how that could be done.

The report, Gravel said to the press, is divided into two sections — 30 pages on bombing policy (from which he quoted today on the floor of the Senate) and 450 pages on the Vietnamization policy.

Gravel indicated that he would move cautiously because of "rumors" that Sen. William B. Saxbe, R-Ohio, would move to censor him if he violated Senate rules in making the classified information public.

Gravel was distributing to all senators today sections of the report dealing with bombing, and was expected to pass out the larger portion of the Vietnamization tomorrow. Three

senators received copies this morning.

Copies of document sections were distributed to the Washington offices of presidential candidates, most on the road campaigning. A Gravel aide said the senator had discussed the report with Sen. George S. McGovern of South Dakota, a leading contender for the Democratic presidential nomination.

Gravel said that he would try again to introduce the over-all document to the Senate at the close of debate this afternoon, and had asked for another 15 minutes tomorrow morning to enter it in the Congressional Record.

Gravel's attempt to read the papers to the Senate raised anew the controversy that developed last summer when he made public a voluminous portion of the so-called Pentagon papers.

In a major test of the powers of Congress in relation to the executive and judicial branches of the government, the Supreme Court has been asked to rule whether aides to the senator can be questioned by a grand jury about the release of the documents.

The new papers appear to be much less controversial than the Pentagon papers. But they provide considerable detail about differences within the government over the situation in Vietnam in the early days of 1969 and over the course that should be followed by the United States. Most of those arguments within the government have previously been made public.

The excerpts from the documents printed by the Post contain a series of 28 questions about the situation in Vietnam apparently posed by Henry A. Kissinger, the President's adviser on National Security affairs, and a summary of response from the State Department, Central Intelligence Agency, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Office of the Secretary of Defense and the military command in Vietnam.

Although there were sharp differences of opinion on some points — with the JCS and the State Department on one side and the Office of

the Secretary of Defense, the State Department and the CIA taking a more cautious or pessimistic view — the over-all

view given to the President was decidedly on the pessimistic side about the situation in Vietnam.

Although the identity of the person or persons who made the study available to Gravel and some of the news media was not revealed, the timing seemed to indicate it was done by someone opposed to the heavy resumption of the bombing of North Vietnam ordered by Nixon.

The papers show a sharp disagreement over the effectiveness of the bombing then being conducted — in South Vietnam and in the panhandle of Laos, but not North Vietnam. The disagreement included both the effectiveness of the B52 bombing in South Vietnam and the effect of attacks in the Laotian panhandle.

The summary published by the Post does not contain an assessment of the bombing of the North, which was stopped by President Lyndon B. Johnson at the end of October 1968. But Anderson's column yesterday said the report in his possession "gives a devastating appraisal of the ineffectiveness" of the Johnson bombing campaign.

"There is little reason to believe that new bombing will accomplish what previous bombings failed to do, unless it is conducted with much greater intensity and readiness to defy criticism or risk of escalation," he quoted a State Department contribution to the study as saying.

The problem of stopping the flow of supplies to the enemy was illustrated by an estimate in the papers published by the Post that the enemy needed a flow of only 80 tons a day from outside the country, or only about two large truckloads.

Since that time, the situation has changed significantly, however. The North Vietnamese have brought a considerable amount of heavy equipment, including tanks and large guns, into South Vietnam and are thus more dependent on a steady flow of fuel, ammunition, spare parts and replacements than they were in 1968 and 1969.